

Dnevni avaz: Interview with High Representative Christian Schmidt



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Avaz: Milorad Dodik sent you an open letter yesterday in which he once again states that you are not a High Representative and even calls you “a disgrace to the German people”. How did you take that letter?

Christian Schmidt: The content of Dodik’s letter is devoid of all dignity. It is not worthy of someone who has political responsibility. But what I see, strangely, Mr. Dodik would like to talk to me, because he sends me a letter. I am ready to talk to them, openly and honestly. I would recommend that he once again ask the UN Secretary General who the High Representative is, and he can also ask the entire PIC. I don’t think it’s good for him to talk only to Vladimir Vladimirovich.

Avaz: There is an interesting detail in the letter, where he states that you humiliate Serbian, Croat, and Bosniak representatives and asks if, after him, you will be arresting people around Sarajevo. Is Dodik perhaps looking for allies in Sarajevo?

Christian Schmidt: It seems to be his personal call for help. I didn’t arrest anyone. If he thinks that he can get to some decisions in Europe with such performances as he is making

here, then this is a danger for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its future.

Avaz: Citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina have witnessed his performances for 17 years, now you know how we feel. But how to deal with him?

Christian Schmidt: If Paddy Ashdown were alive, I would ask him that question. It's a difficult task, because I don't want to use the instruments that Ashdown used. If he wants to remain in a position of responsibility, he must change his behavior, otherwise I see only difficulties for him.

Avaz: This sounds like a threat. Is Dodik's dismissal also an option?

Christian Schmidt: I always said that those instruments are on the table. The problems we have would be best solved by the local society. Contrary to Dodik's claim about my colonial management, I would be happy if I didn't have to make decisions. And should not be convinced that he will hide behind the people or that the RS people support him. If we remember October 2, the results for the RS president were very debatable, they are talked about a lot.

Avaz: Why didn't you go to Banja Luka on Tuesday, despite the announcement?

Christian Schmidt: You will understand that I cannot and will not present all the information I have publicly, but there were reasons. I believe that we are not in this confrontation like in "western" movies, instead we have to talk sensibly with each other.

Avaz: Still, you are aware that you have left an impression of weakness. Dodik and his people were triumphant, Ćamil Duraković, with whom you were supposed to meet, was disappointed, and individuals from FBiH accused you of being scared and of being a High Representative only on the

territory of the Federation.

Christian Schmidt: I was informed that someone in the RS wanted to make a “cock-fight”. I am not available for such a thing. My strength is not manifested in screaming, but in wisdom. Helmut Kohl (Kohl), who was one of my teachers, said that what you get in the end is important. Forget everything that is happening around. Be sure, I will go to the Republika Srpska whenever I want because it is Bosnia and Herzegovina and because there is no border between the entities, there is only an administrative line.

Avaz: How do you comment on the fact that the opposition in the RS also refused to meet with you?

Christian Schmidt: I have understanding for the opposition. It is not easy to be the opposition in the RS. But in relation to those parties that you mentioned, I could also tell you the place and time when their leaders asked me to remove Dodik using the Bonn powers. That’s why I was even surprised that some of them showed solidarity with Dodik.

Avaz: These are very serious claims. Which leaders from the RS asked you to remove Dodik?

Christian Schmidt: Soon after I arrived in BiH, they kept repeating that to me. I think someone said that in public. But those were confidential talks and I can’t tell you that. When I meet those who participated in it, I will definitely look them deep in the eyes, maybe some of them will blush.

Avaz: But Dodik can use it as an argument that they are traitors who serve the colonial administrator, as he calls you.

Christian Schmidt: Well, I’m such a colonial administrator that I didn’t remove him from office. There were even requests from the RS to remove the other two who were then in the Presidency, Željko Komšić and Šefik Džaferović.

Avaz: Yesterday, Dodik also announced that the RS budget will provide funds for Serbs who leave the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Are you afraid of the scenario of abandonment and therefore collapse of state institutions, and do you, as a High Representative, have a ready answer to that?

Christian Schmidt: I can only say to the people from the RS who work in institutions – don't rely on his words. This year we are witnessing that Dodik is not in a situation to finance his associates in the Republika Srpska in the long term. And for the next year, he promises to provide funds for civil servants if they leave the institutions in a year when they will have to pay back large debts. Well, I wish him the best... It's time for him to stop playing a Scrooge McDuck, because there's no such money. If he continues the way he started, he will have even more problems because the other countries he thinks will give him money will not give him money, just like my home country Germany did not.

Avaz: In a recent interview with the German FAZ, you said that one of the possibilities for solving the issue of state property would be the transfer of ownership to a joint agency, whose income would be fairly distributed. Given that you must have considered that solution, could you briefly tell us what it would entail?

Christian Schmidt: This is not a solution that has been determined so far, the commission is working on it. I was talking about my own experiences from Germany. We in Germany did it that way during the unification of East and West Germany. Those areas that were in the territory of East Germany were defined as people's property. We merged them all and in the meantime they were allocated to municipalities, provinces and cities so that they could be economized, but the income generated from them went to the common coffers. But the starting point of such ideas is to first recognize the verdict of the Constitutional Court that the former state property from the former Yugoslavia belongs to the state of Bosnia and

Herzegovina, and only then can further work be started.

Avaz: SDA and DF accuse you of wanting to hand over state property to Dodik, while Dodik, on the other hand, accuses you of wanting to steal state property from the RS. Both cannot be true.

Christian Schmidt: When you have politicians who have been there for decades and were asked for everything, I wonder how they can have the nerve to lecture me about state property and use that for spins. All, absolutely all former Yugoslav republics solved the issue of state property a long time ago, and that is a failure of politics, of all, including SDA, DF, SNSD, and HDZ. Before they start with conspiracy theories about me, let them first look at themselves in the mirror.